



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## SDDVA ASSISTS VETERANS AT MIKE DURFEE STATE PRISON

Please join us for a-

### JOB FAIR

MDSP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Monday, April 16, 2018  
1:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
Mike Durfee State Prison  
(LIBRARY - VISITORS CENTER)

**Meet Hundreds of Potential Employees with Vocational Experience in a Variety of Fields:**

INCLUDING

- Auto Body (ASE)
- Welding (AWS)
- Auto Mechanics (ASE)
- Construction / Building Trades

Many others with experience in:

TRUCK DRIVING FOOD SERVICE MASONRY ROAD CONSTRUCTION CUSTOMER SERVICE ELECTRICAL AND MORE

**EXPLORE THE BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING WORKERS WITH FELONY CONVICTIONS**

**APRIL 16** To reserve a table, fill out and return the form on the back of this flyer.

Provide an ex-offender on-the-job training and get reimbursed a portion of the training costs! See DLR!

Hire an ex-offender and receive a federal income tax credit! See DLR! WOTC Program

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Program Manager Erin Bultje represented the Department at the Job Fair at the Mike Durfee State Prison this week.

There were a total of 19 booths at the job fair and 139 inmates that went through the Fair.

"Staff at the Mike Durfee State Prison discussed the importance of vocational programs and helping inmates to be able to get a job upon release," said Rebecca Schieffer, Associate Warden. "The idea of a job fair came up to highlight the vocational programs and graduates. With the help of the instructors, staff and inmates; the job fair has been very successful and there is talk of doing it again."

"I was so impressed with participation in the job fair, not only from the inmates but from the businesses that participated," said Bultje. "A lot of great information was provided and demonstrated there are people wanting to help the inmates and are offering opportunities for them to succeed when they are released."

Bultje noted she looks forward to working with the staff and inmate veterans.

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# SPINK COUNTY RECOGNIZES WW II VETERANS

Spink County VSO Gordon Richard organized quite a celebration for the WWII Veterans in Spink County last week.

This great event started with an authentic Cajun dinner served by the VFW commander, himself a Purple Heart Recipient. Family members were invited to join their heroes at this honoring ceremony. After the dinner, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs' "Greatest Generation Coin" was presented to each of these heroes.

Heroes honored were John Solheim who served in the

Rhineland Ardennes Forest; Duane Mason who was part of the U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany;

Mary Goodwin, an RN who served in England and took care of the Army Air Corps flyers and other personnel; John Jansen who served with the Army of Occupation of Germany; Bonnie Ellis, sergeant; and Donald Strivens, who while serving in Rome, was struck by an explosion and was wounded. Donald is also a Purple Heart Recipient.

The star of the night was Bonnie Ellis who came dressed in her uniform.

Special thanks to Spink County for honoring these heroes!





# SPARROW CONTINUES HIS SEARCH FOR WWII HEROES

Like most county and tribal veterans service officers, Turner County VSO Tom Sparrow never hits the OFF button.

Whether at the office, at the local coffee shop, or out-of-town shopping, Sparrow continues to look for, reach out to and thank veterans for their service.

While in Sioux Falls last week, Tom discovered another World War II Veteran. He thanked him for his service and presented him with the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs' "Greatest Generation Coin."

Sparrow discovered that this veteran had a friend that was also a World War II Veteran and so Sparrow reached out to him and presented him a medal as well.



Thanks for never hitting the off button Tom!

While visiting with these veterans, Sparrow discovered that there is a group of World War II Veterans that meet in Sioux Falls once a week, so he plans to visit them soon.

# MJFSVH STAFF PURPLES UP



Staff at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home donned their purple in support of military kids.

April is designated as the Month of the Military Child; a time to honor the sacrifices made by military families worldwide, with an emphasis on the experience of the dependent children of military members serving at home and overseas.

Wearing purple is a visible way to show support and thank military youth for their strength and

sacrifices. Purple indicates that all branches of the military are supported; Air Force blue, Army green, Navy blue, Marine red, and Coast Guard blue all thought to combine together as a single color, **PURPLE**.

# NEVER SAY NEVER

Patrick N. Sheppard served in the United States Marine Corps from 1966 to 1972. Over the years he had misplaced his discharge certificate and wanted a copy for his family to see and to hang on his wall.

He worked with local contacts and was unable to obtain this document, so he made a stop at the SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office and visited with SDDVA Veterans Service Officer Joseph Leasure.

"We should never say 'never' since we work in a maybe business," said Leasure. "Our role is to always look for the 'what if door' and look for every avenue to have a successful outcome."



Leasure was successful in getting the discharge certificate for this veteran.

# DAV STATE CONVENTION

Members of the South Dakota Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will hold their 79<sup>th</sup> annual department convention in Deadwood April 27-29 at the Lodge at Deadwood (100 Pine Crest Lane).

More than 100 DAV members - including many disabled veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan – are expected to attend.

The DAV will be hosting a Veterans Town Hall meeting on Friday, April 27, at 3:00 pm (MT). South Dakota Congressional Delegation staff, VA staff, VISN 23 director, and SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman will be fielding questions from veterans on: healthcare, VA benefits, female veterans programs, caregiver support and services, VA Choice program, employment, reform of VA benefits, and PTSD & TBI for our veterans and their families.

This convention's highlight will be the Saturday night banquet with DAV National Assistant Executive Director Edward R. Reese, Jr. and DAV Auxiliary National 1<sup>st</sup> Jr. Vice Commander Diane J. Franz as the featured speakers.



# HOWARD WOOD TO HONOR VETERANS

Track Fans ---- Howard Wood Dakota Relays are offering a free pass for veterans!!!!

The Howard Wood Dakota Relays will be held on Friday and Saturday, May 4-5, at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls. Events will start at 10:30 am on Friday and 9:00 am Saturday.

They are inviting all veterans and their immediate family to be their guests on that weekend. There will be a VETERANS GATE for veterans, and all the veteran needs to do is identify themselves as a veteran for free admittance. No ID card is required. At some time during the program, all veterans will be recognized.

Win/Win – Great opportunity to support our youth and our veterans!!!!!! Here is a link for the complete schedule.

<http://www.dakotarelays.com/meet-information/schedule-of-events/>.





# VA TAKES DECISIVE ACTION TO MOVE OFF GAO HIGH-RISK LIST

Recently the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced actions it will take to address challenges and issues identified by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) when it placed the VA on its High-Risk List. The move is designed to address lingering deficiencies in its health-care system once and for all.

Every two years, GAO calls attention to agencies and program areas that are high risk as a result of vulnerabilities and in need of transformation. The VA is currently in the midst of a department-wide modernization that will build capacity for long-term management of GAO High-Risk List activities and strengthen the VA's foundational business practices.

GAO identified five specific risk areas when it added the VA health care to the Federal government's list of 32 high-risk agencies and programs in 2015: ambiguous policies and inconsistent processes, inadequate oversight and accountability, information technology challenges, inadequate training for VA staff, and unclear resource needs and allocation priorities. The VA recently delivered a comprehensive action plan to GAO that includes these crucial steps the agency has taken to address these risk areas for VA health care, along with a number of others to improve business operations:

- Reducing ambiguity and red tape. Eliminated outdated policy documents. The VA has already purged more than 235 expired directives and 85 percent of all outdated manuals.
- Eliminating bureaucracy and streamlining decision making. The VA has reduced central office staff positions by 10 percent and consolidated its policy and operations functions in mental health, primary care, and geriatrics to improve support to field activities and veteran-facing services. These restructuring actions allow the VA to become more efficient by pushing decision rights to the lowest appropriate level.
- Strengthening internal oversight and accountability. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) established the Office of Integrity to consolidate its compliance, ethics, and oversight programs under a single executive, and moved swiftly to establish an internal audit function and associated governance committee that provides the Under Secretary for Health with an independent and objective way to assess operations.
- Modernizing information technology support. The VA's Electronic Health Record (EHR) Modernization program will enable seamless care and full interoperability with the Department of Defense's EHR modernization solution, and enhance the ability to exchange Veteran health data with community health partners.
- Clarifying resource needs and priorities. The VA established a centralized manpower management office to integrate staffing processes, and transformed its financial management methods to improve resource planning and allocation.

In addition to addressing the GAO high-risk areas, the VA continually responds to GAO recommendations on VA operations throughout each year. At any given time, there are 80 to 100 open recommendations about VA health care. Overall, the VA has succeeded in closing approximately 377 recommendations since 2009, and is committed to closing as quickly as possible all 22 recommendations that GAO has identified as high priority.

The VA expects the next GAO report to be released in early 2019.

# VA UPDATES ASSISTANCE FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ongoing efforts to help transitioning service members navigate and understand the VA's various benefits, the agency recently updated VA's briefing portion of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) – an interagency initiative authorized as a voluntary program in 1991 under the National Defense Authorization Act and made mandatory under the VOW to Hire Heroes Act in 2011 to help service members adjust to civilian life.

The new VA briefing is designed to be more collaborative and stimulating, helping service members make informed decisions about their health care, employment, housing and other benefits.

Because no two transitions are the same, the updates deliver elements relevant to service members based on where they are in their career and life. The redesign will encourage whole-health support for service members and their family members, to include relevant information about Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and allow time to identify local VSO representatives.

The updates, released this month, incorporated suggestions made by veterans, VSOs and post-9/11 veterans groups, including taking a more holistic view of a service member's new life, as well as the psychosocial aspects of the transition to civilian life.

"In fiscal year 2017, the VA provided more than 63,000 events to educate more than 500,000 transitioning service members and family members," said Margarita Devlin, executive director of the VA Benefits Assistance Service. "The VA consistently receives high evaluations from service members who attend these benefits briefings, and we have taken the next step by incorporating recommendations by other stakeholders to make the program even better."

The VA will now work to fully integrate TAP objectives into the military lifecycle, and as an added benefit, will begin implementing a post-transition veteran survey. To view VA's updated curriculum, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/TAP/>.







*South Dakota* **38th Annual**  
**July 6-8**  
**2018**

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD**  
1-800-SD-GUARD  
www.sdguard.com

Scan to see our FB Page!

**2018 National Guard Walleye Tournament**

**OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES PRESENT & FORMER**

**HONORING OUR HEROES**

**Door Prizes**

**Pierre National Guard Armory**  
Social and Drawing @ Pierre Armory  
Friday, July 6th 7-9pm  
drawings: must be present to win

Top 5 places on Saturday will be paid! 1st - \$300, 2nd \$200, 3rd \$150, 4th & 5th \$100.

**Fishing times**  
**7am - 4:30pm Saturday**  
**7am - 3:30pm Sunday**

**Entry Fees**  
\$80 per team  
2 per team

**Limit of 50 teams**

**Fish from West Bend to Bushes Landing on the Mighty mo**

**Contact: Matt Thorn (605-690-9334) or Alex Raber (605-430-6326)**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood  
May 8—SFVAHCS Baby Shower—6:00 pm (CT)  
May 10—VABHHCS Baby Shower  
May 11—AHEC Improving Veterans Care Conference—University Center—Sioux Falls  
May 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)  
May 19—MOPH State Convention—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
May 22—SDDVA Mini Conference via Skype—10:00 am (CT)  
May 24-25—PVA Disabled Veterans Fishing Tournament—Chamberlain  
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish  
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls  
Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)  
Jul 13 —VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)  
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV  
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO  
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre  
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre  
Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN  
Sept 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)  
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)  
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



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